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BOTANY.

Botany Forty Years Ago. — In a Washington book-stall, was found not long since, a copy of a book, probably now becoming rare. "Floræ Columbianæ Prodromus Exhibens Enumerationem Plantarum quæ hactenus Exploratæ sunt: or A Prodromus of The Flora Columbiana, Exhibiting a List of All the Plants, which have as yet been Collected. Compiled by John A. Brereton, M.D., U.S.A., Washington. Printed by Jonathan Elliot, and sold at his store on Pennsylvania Avenue, 1830."

The preface states that in 1825, was formed "The Botanic Club," consisting of Wm. Mechlin, Wm. Rich, Alex. McWilliams, M.D., John A. Brereton, M.D., and James W. Robbins, M.D., having for its object "to explore and to investigate, *de novo*, the indigenous plants growing in the District of Columbia.

As the result of five years' exploration, this Prodromus is published, giving a list of four hundred and thirty-eight genera with nine hundred and nineteen species, a large number for one locality. But again quoting from the preface, "The erudite Botanist will be astonished to perceive the names of several plants, in this Prodromus, which he is well aware, belong to other localities; but when he considers the various and alpine sources of our majestic Potomac, on whose stream their rudiments are borne, and deposited along its bank, his astonishment will cease." The plants are arranged according to the Linnæan System, while in an appendix is given "An Exposition of the Natural System of Jussieu."

This little work gives a pleasant picture of scientific interest and zeal, so long ago, and carries us back to the early days of American Botany. In the list of authors, we find no mention of the name of Dr. Gray (to-day it would be like the play of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out), but instead, Clayton, Walter, Michaux,

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Mountain Plover; Allen, western Kansas. 178a, Æ. melodus, Piping Plover; Baird. 178b, Squatarola helvetica, Black-bellied Plover; Baird. 185a, Tringa Americana, Red-backed Sandpiper; Allen, near Leavenworth. 186a, Actodromas Bairdii; Baird. 197a, Limosa Hudsonica; Baird. 198a, Numenius Hudsonicus; Baird. 198b, N. borealis, Esquimaux Curlew; Allen, a single specimen seen. 202a, Gallinula galeata; Baird. 207a, Bernicla Hutchinsii; Baird. 226a, Mergus serrator; Baird. 56a,* Empidonax acadicus, Green-crested Flycatcher; Allen, E. Kansas. 76e,* Dendroica discolor, Prairie Warbler; Allen, E. Kansas. 122a, Coturniculus Henslowii, Henslow's Bunting; Popenoe, Topeka. 201a, Porzana Jamaicensis, Little Black Rail, Allen, one specimen.

Rich, Pursh, Bigelow, Nuttall, Barton, Elliot, Torrey and Darlington, the latter of whom is spoken of as giving them his assistance, while a member of the House of Representatives.

Should such an example be imitated, and Natural History Societies spring up in every city or even village, not ambitiously seeking to accumulate large collections, but simply to make as complete as possible local collections of the fauna, flora, etc., of the vicinity, how many youthful naturalists might be trained, and what valuable additions might be made to our stock of knowledge respecting the inhabitants of our fields, woods and waters!

Another item of interest is found in this little book, "It would appear from recent observations, that some plants are *periodical* in their efflorescence; or from some unknown cause, disappear for several years at a time; for instance, *Orchis spectabilis* was found by members of the late Botanical Society, eight or ten years ago; and although the most diligent search has been made for it, for at least five years past, it has not been discovered until this season, when it is very abundant, and has been found in various parts of the District, by different individuals. I have also observed that *Arethusa bulbosa* is very abundant some years, and during others extremely rare. About five years since, *Batschia canescens*, was found in great abundance, near the Race-course, but has never been seen since."

The writer has had many similar experiences. In 1860, he found *Subularia aquatica*, growing very plentifully, on the muddy banks of a canal basin, near Portland, Me., but has never been able to find a trace of it since.

Cypripedium arietinum was found some years ago, in the vicinity of Portland, quite plentifully, by Dr. Wm. Wood. Several times during the next five years we visited the locality, but found not a plant, till 1869, when we gathered some twenty specimens.

Again, the writer botanized in the vicinity of Seneca Lake, in company with Prof. Wm. H. Brewer of Yale College, one or the other of us, going over the ground quite thoroughly for seven summers, and collecting over seven hundred species.

During these seven years, many species appeared, disappeared, and reappeared, without apparent cause, and without perceptible change in the climatic or other conditions. Among these, were *Ranunculus Purshii*, *Aplectrum hyemale*, *Orchis spectabilis*, *Pterospora andromedea*, and others not now remembered.

Probably every careful botanist would be able to relate similar experiences.— J. W. CHICKERING, JR. *Washington.*

MOOSEWOOD FIBRE.— At a recent meeting of the California Academy of Sciences, Dr. A. Kellogg presented specimens of the bark of a shrub *Dirca palustris* (Moosewood) of stronger fibre than any hitherto known, obtainable in this vicinity by tons and in the valley of the Mississippi by millions of tons.

The bark presented was in the crude condition as it came from the Ramie machine. The entire shrub, wood and bark, is suitable to work into fine quality of paper.

If desirable to separate the bark, it is done in the easiest manner possible. On the State University grounds may be seen a tree four and one-half to five inches in diameter. Mixed with silk the fibre is superior to Ramie. Even for coarse fabrics it may prove a substitute for jute, of which a very large amount is annually imported into the Southern States for baling cotton. The tree is familiar to us as Moosewood, but has not heretofore been brought forward, so far as we are aware, as material for paper.

OBIONE SUCKLEYANA TORREY.—In our Colorado collections last year we find this plant, perhaps the first time gathered so far north.— THOMAS MEEHAN.

BOTANICAL NOTABILIA.—E. A. Thompson of North Woburn announces a wild double-flowered state of *Saxifraga Virginiensis.* We have heard of this in only one instance before. Rev. N. Coleman finds at Grand Rapids, Michigan, a *Trillium grandiflorum* "with six sepals and fifteen petals, all green." This *chlorosis* monstrosity occurs occasionally, but we have never seen so many floral leaves. Also *Ranunculus Purshii* with leaves all dissected although the plants were strictly terrestrial, rooted in merely moist ground.

CORRECTION.—In my remarks, in the last number, on *Quercus alba* var. *Gunnisonii*, I wrote, "some of the trees have the bark of *Q. alba*," not *none* of the trees, as was printed.—THOS. MEEHAN.

ZOOLOGY.

THE GREGARIOUS RAT OF TEXAS (*Sigmodon Berlandierii*).— This is a burrowing, gregarious rat, and like the Prairie dog lives